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THE SILVER CASKET

Letters and Poems by

MARY STUART
QUEEN OF SCOTS

THE SILVER CASKET

BEING
LOVE-LETTERS AND
LOVE-POEMS ATTRIBUTED TO
MARY STUART, QUEEN OF SCOTS
NOW MODERNISED OR
TRANSLATED, WITH AN
INTRODUCTION

BY
CLIFFORD BAX

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To
ERIC GILLET

WHAT THE READER MUST KNOW

I

IN order that the Reader may be able to decide for himself whether the following Letters and Sonnets were written by Mary, Queen of Scots or were forged by her enemies, he must be put in possession of a few facts. The controversy, acrid at times, about the authenticity of the Letters—only two (ancient) writers seeming to doubt that the Queen wrote the Sonnets—began in her lifetime and has continued for close upon four hundred years. I have made up my mind on the subject but will try to hold the scales fairly and not to let the jury guess my opinion until the end of the case. It will be an irregular case because the defence will speak first.

Mary Stuart was the daughter of James the Fifth, King of Scotland, and of his French wife, Marie of Lorraine. She was born "in December" 1542. Her father died a few days later. She was "crowned" on the 9th of September, 1543, that is to say, before she was one year old. In 1548, when she was five, Mary was betrothed to the dauphin François and was taken to Paris where she was elaborately educated : for example, she had Ronsard himself as her poetry-tutor. She and the Dauphin duly married amidst much lovely pomp of a kind which our democratic era is not likely to see. This happened on April the 24th, 1558, when Mary was fifteen-and-a-half. Two years later, on December the 5th, 1560, the Dauphin, who had become François the Second, died. Mary, no longer Queen of France, then decided to use her right to the throne of Scotland. She arrived at Leith on an August day in 1561. She was nineteen, charming, high-spirited, brilliant, and a royal widow

who was next in succession to our Queen Elizabeth as Queen of England. Perhaps no other human being has entered the world and grown up in quite such a dazzle of glory.

Well, suitors crowded about her, and Mary's diplomacy is a fascinating study, but in November, 1564, "she gave her heart at first sight," says Swinburne, "to her kinsman Henry, Lord Darnley," son of the Earl of Lennox. I doubt if "she gave her heart": I suspect that she inclined to Darnley because he, as coming next in succession to herself, would greatly reinforce her claim to the throne of England. Moreover, he was a Catholic as she was, and Mary certainly intended to root out, if possible, the heresy which was flourishing so copiously in certain parts of Europe and even in France itself.

She soon tired of Darnley. He was a silly, foppish young man who had no intention of living as the mere consort of an energetic and fascinating queen. He fell sick of the smallpox. Several of the Scottish lords, headed by the Earl of Bothwell, decided to get rid of a petulant half-king who had incurably estranged the Queen. At one time Mary acknowledged that she would be glad to get free of Darnley if this could be effected without injuring her honour and the prospects of their child, the future James the First of England. Lethington, her Secretary, told her that he would arrange everything to her satisfaction. Had he already planned the murder of Darnley? The house in which Darnley lay sick was blown up by gunpowder in the small hours of Monday, the 10th of February, 1567. Everybody knew that Bothwell was the chief culprit. "It is certain," says Swinburne, "that just three months and six days after the murder of her husband, she became the wife of her husband's murderer,"—Bothwell. In the interim he had abducted her, and we do not know whether she was ravished against her will or with her consent. That is a point for

the Reader to decide ; and it is one upon which the ninth Sonnet throws a clear light. Consider also Letter Six.

After she had married Bothwell, the most active Scottish lords decided that he was likely to become too powerful. They determined to smash the marriage : and by force of arms they succeeded. Mary surrendered to the rebels, and Bothwell rode away. (He ended as a pirate off the coast of Sweden.)

Those are the facts which you must know, and now I will tell you about the discovery of the Silver Casket.

II

The ringleader of Queen Mary's Scottish enemies was the Earl of Morton. He and his colleagues were determined to kill or get rid of Bothwell and to persuade Mary to abdicate. In those days most people believed that

“ There's a divinity doth hedge a king,”

and that is why the rebel lords felt that they must justify themselves if they imprisoned their queen. The best way, obviously, was to find letters written by her in which her knowledge of the plot to murder Darnley would be as plain as Mrs. Thompson's letters to Bywaters made plain her desire to be rid of Mr. Thompson. The Earl of Morton stated that on June the 20th, 1567, a few days after the Queen's surrender, he captured a certain George Dalgleish who was one of Bothwell's menservants. Dalgleish, said Morton, had in his possession a silver-gilt Casket. It was locked. Morton in his “ Declaration,” made on December the 9th (a long time after the alleged capture of the casket) states that on June the 21st, 1567, he in the presence of several eminent men broke open the Casket and that the contents were then “ sighted.” This word, which is semi-legal, meant “ scrutinised carefully ” or “ closely examined.”

He states that the persons present included the Earl of Atholl, leader of the Scottish Catholics, the Earl of Mar, the Earl of Glencairn ; Lords Home, Semple (a Catholic) and Sanquha ; the Master of Graham ; Lethington, the Queen's ex-Secretary ; Archibald Douglas, and the Laird of Tullibardine, another Catholic. This "declaration" was not known to the early controversialists. Its importance comes from the fact that all the men named were alive when Morton made his Declaration and any one of them, therefore, could have said either that he was not present or that he believed the papers to be forged. None of them said a word.

These papers were sent to England : to Queen Elizabeth and to Robert Cecil, Lord Burghley, with the intention of discrediting the Queen of Scots and justifying the rebel lords. They were minutely examined, and several of them, with notes by Cecil, are still at Hatfield. It is useful to bear in mind that these documents, a few of which are highly incriminating, were submitted to certain English Catholics who might be supposed to favour Mary, namely, the Earls of Norfolk, Westmorland and Northumberland. They did not challenge the authenticity of the documents ; but we must also consider that the Scottish lords never produced the original manuscripts. Indeed, nobody knows what became of them, if indeed they existed.

III

We do not know even in what language these eight letters were first written, for in some cases we have versions in Latin, English, Scots and French. Goodall, writing in 1754, considered that he had proved that the originals were in Scots. On the other hand, we are told by Henderson, writing in 1890, that "Mary wrote Scots with some difficulty in

1568," and of course French would be her natural language. Most of her defenders maintain that the letters were fabricated by a certain George Buchanan at the behest of the hostile lords. In 1571 Buchanan published a book called *Detectio Maria Scotorum Regina*, and this book contains the letters in Scots and three of them also in Latin. In the same year an edition in Scots was published in London with the title "Ane Detection of the duinges of Marie Queene of Scots." In 1572 an edition appeared as coming from St. Andrews. An edition in French, containing seven of the letters (Letter Three being omitted) came out in 1573, and in that year a Huguenot named Cumez issued a separate French edition at Rochelle. His versions vary to a slight extent from what I will call the Published French Version.

Let us now hear what the defenders have to say. First, the late Mr. Walter Goodall of the mid-eighteenth-century, who says, "As we have seven letters only in the pretended original French, and no less than eight in the Scottish copies, some people may be at a loss to conceive how that could have happened. We observed already that Murray [Queen Mary's bastard brother] actually presented eight before the English Commissioners, but they quietly rejected one of that number. The reason was, because it is so confused and obscure that there is no translating or understanding it; so that had they preserved the French of it, it would probably have helped to disclose the forgery more than any of the rest.

"Besides the letters"—so does Goodall continue,—"Murray and his accomplices produced two contracts of marriage betwixt the Queen and the Earl of Bothwell, the one without date, said to be written by the Queen herself, and the other said to be written by the Earl of Huntley, as also some French sonnets, published along

with the detection, both in Scots and French, which are as meer forgeries as the letters.”*

Greatly to my surprise Mr. Goodall actually says, “The sonnets too seem to have been first written in the Scottish language as well as the letters. Each sonnet is known to consist of fourteen verses ; but, unhappily, two of ours, to wit, the third and eighth, in the original French have only thirteen verses ; and yet we have the full fourteen always in the alleged Scots translation. George Buchanan tells us that they are written with tolerable elegance : Indeed it was necessary that they should have been so, to make them pass for Q. Mary’s composition : But every man’s eyes and ears will tell him, that it is not so ; the versification is stark naught, the thoughts altogether mean and incoherent, and every part of it, quite destitute of the elegance and accuracy required in a sonnet.” I should tell the Reader, at this point, that the Scottish version of the sonnets are in exceedingly rough prose. It seems curious that the forger should have troubled to forge French sonnets which in no way incriminate Mary in the murder of Darnley — especially if they were first written in extremely crude Scots prose ! We may surely admit that she did write these French sonnets.

Let us however call upon a later gentleman who wished to be known as J. F. N. He wrote in 1870 that George Buchanan was one who “in his better days had written sundry odes in exuberant praise of the Queen’s charms and virtues, but as soon as he found that he could carry coarser wares to a more lucrative market, under the patronage of such men as Morton and Lethington and Murray, he changed his tune and miserably sacrificed his honour.” “The ‘Detection,’” says J. F. N., “is the foundation and

* The other writer to question the authenticity of the sonnets was Brantôme, who declares that Ronsard (in conversation) also rejected them.

keystone of all the attacks upon Mary which have subsequently filled so many volumes. . . . Without the letters, the evidence against Mary is ridiculously abortive; with the letters, if they are genuine, it is complete and conclusive."

Again, we should hear John Hosack, author of *Mary Queen of Scots and her Accusers*, who said, "The more the Casket Letters are discussed, the better, for they will not bear examination." It was, let us consider, this same Mr. Hosack who discovered Morton's "Declaration," a document which, on account of the names cited by Morton, seems latterly to have shaken Mr. Hosack's confidence. He also found, in the Record Office, an English version of Letter Three which is not translated from any known letter, Latin or Scots or French.

IV

The strongest arguments against the authenticity of the letters are :

1. That the originals were never produced.
2. That the Queen did not have time enough at Glasgow to write Letter Two, by far the most damaging letter.
3. That a man named Crawford, who had been in the service of Darnley gave in his deposition an account of a conversation between Darnley and the Queen which is almost word-for-word identical with that which the Queen is supposed to have written in Letter Two.
4. That Mary herself wrote, "I never writ anything concerning that matter (the murder of Darnley) to any creature; and gif ony sic writings be, they are false and feinzeit (feigned), forged and invented by themselves (the rebel lords), only to my dishonour and slander: and there are divers in Scotland both men and women that can counterfeit my handwriting, and write the like manner of writing

which I use, as well as myself, and principally such as are in company with themselves" (the lords). This denial may have been inspired by the receipt from Queen Elizabeth of a printed copy of Buchanan's "Detection."

5. Morton said that he had captured the letters on June the 20th, 1567, and that he and his associates "sighted" them on June the 21st. They were not laid before the Scottish Parliament until December of that year. On December the 4th, 1567, the lords declared that they had rebelled in the June of that year because the letters had proved Mary's guilt in the matter of Darnley's death. They took, therefore, a long time to say so. Moreover, they had rebelled some days before the capture of the casket.

6. The French Ambassador asked on June the 23rd why the Queen had been imprisoned. The lords said nothing to him about the letters although the letters were said to have been "sighted" two days earlier.

Before we allow the prosecution to speak, we ought to record that a German (Gerdes) considered that Letter One was written *by* Darnley *to* Mary, and that parts of Letter Two were written by Mary to Murray: also that another German (Sepp) concluded that the main parts of the letters were constructed by Buchanan from pages in a Diary, though there is no evidence that the Queen kept a diary. Moreover, commentators differ extravagantly about the merit of the immense Letter Two. Froude, the historian, held that "it could have been invented [he does not say *written*] only by a genius equal to that of Shakespeare"; a Mr. Skelton, who believed in Mary's innocence, exclaims, "a rustic wench trying painfully to write a letter to her sweetheart would have succeeded better"; and Hosack emphasises that "the first half is fierce and reckless, the other full of remorse."

Let us consider the defence point by point.

1. The originals were not produced and seem not to exist. T. F. Henderson suggests that James the First would naturally cause the letters to be destroyed since they prove, if genuine, that his mother connived at the murder of his father (Darnley). Nevertheless, we cannot understand why Morton and his friends, having "sighted" the letters in June made no use of them until December; nor is it easy to see why they sent only copies and not the originals to Queen Elizabeth and Cecil.

2. The Queen, says the defence, would not have had time to write the long Letter Two. It is subscribed as from Glasgow. "Hosack," we read, "took his stand on what he termed Mary's accusers' ground—that she set out from Edinburgh on the 21st [of January] and arrived in Glasgow on the 23rd. The long Glasgow letter . . . could not have been begun on the night of Mary's arrival, because of the reference to Darnley confessing about Hiegate on 'the morne after' her arrival; and because of the words, 'the King (Darnley) sent for Joachim yesternight.'" Henderson, who is on the side of the prosecution, comments that "the diaries of two Edinburgh citizens render it not impossible that Mary *arrived* in Glasgow as early even as the 21st." He also points out that halfway in her long letter the Queen says, or is made to say, "This is my first journey" (day's work).

3. The defence maintains that the record of the Queen's talk with Darnley (Letter Two) was copied from Crawford's account of the same talk, presumably recounted to Crawford by Darnley himself. Here, certainly, is a strong point. The prosecution, however, suggests that a vivid and vital conversation between a husband and a wife might well be

recorded by each in almost identical words : and, alternatively, that Crawford was shown Letter Two before he made his declaration precisely that he might reinforce the Queen's incriminating words. The question is, therefore, did Crawford see the Letter or was it based (by the forger) on Crawford's recollections ?

4. Mary's denial that she wrote the letters is of no value. In later life she denied having written letters indubitably genuine in connection with the pathetic Babington Conspiracy.

Again, she corresponded copiously with France and Spain but never refers in that correspondence to the Casket letters. It is true that she asked to see the originals, but there can be no doubt that neither the Queen nor her supporters challenged with any vigour the authenticity of the letters and poems. The theory that the incriminating passages were copied by Buchanan from a supposed diary is unimpressive if only because Mary could easily have ruined the forgery and her enemies by simply saying "it is copied from my diary." It is true that she would then have admitted her guilt, but she did almost as much by not challenging the letters more vigorously.

VI

If you compare the Scots, English, Latin and published French versions of these famous letters, you are likely to conclude that the originals were written in French. Bothwell must have known the language well because he lived in Paris for several years. Moreover, the Published French version is at many points much easier to understand than the Scots or English versions. The Scots version aligns much more precisely with the French than the English version does : but the Scottish translator of the sonnets,

who was probably working for Cecil, occasionally gives up an obscure passage in despair. For example, the line in Sonnet V which I have translated as

“She did but counterfeit a little sadness”

is, in French,

“Son doigt monstroït la tristesse du cœur”

which ludicrously appears, in Scots, as,

“Her sadness schew the tristesse of hir hart,”

not a really helpful rendering of a dark and difficult line ! (I gather from two French friends that the line means that Lady Bothwell pointed to her sad heart in excuse for not returning Bothwell’s ardour. That she had once been attached to some nincompoop seems clear if we read Sonnet IV.)

Another reason for believing that Mary did write these letters is supplied by the extraordinary memoranda which disfigure Letter Two. Observe how the Queen, coming to the end of her sheet of paper, seems suddenly to find that she has already scribbled notes on it, just as you or I might end a letter with the words, “I am so sorry : I had no other writing-paper yesterday, and so I used this piece to jot down some headings.” Consider, too, that the memoranda contain the significant words “Of the Earl of Bothwell.” They obviously refer to some other letter which the Queen proposed to write. What forger would be so extremely ingenious as (1) to insert these incongruous memoranda, and (2) to include in a letter to Bothwell a reminder to write about him ?

No, Mr. Swinburne was right. If we wish to maintain that Mary Stuart knew nothing of Bothwell’s plan for murdering Darnley, we have to decide that she had no intelligence. All the evidence is to the contrary. In a word, she cannot be both innocent and intelligent. We know she was the latter.

My opinion, for what it is worth, is that Mary wrote these letters and that, although she says, like so many subsequent adulteresses, "burn this," Bothwell had not the heart to burn her letters. If she did not write them she would almost certainly have more vehemently challenged them, especially when Cecil published them for all the world to read. And again, are they the kind of love-letters—most of them almost harmless—which a forger would have devised ? A forger would have made them much more incriminating. At the same time it is possible that the passage in Letter Two (p. 21), which so closely resembles Crawford's deposition, was inserted into the body of a genuine letter.

The sonnets, so far as I know, have never hitherto been translated into verse. The only translation which I have found is the bald unhelpful version in Scots. Perhaps only a few scholars hitherto have even read them—at least during the last three hundred years. These scholars formed a contemptuous opinion of them which I am unable to share.

The involved, ornate, rhythmless and clumsy style of the Letters is characteristic of pre-Shakespearean prose. It makes the Letters impossible to translate attractively and, I am afraid, difficult to read ; but this elaborate style goes with the costumes of the age. One Letter (Number Three) has no stops at all.

LETTER ONE

(In Latin, French, Scots and English. The English version is in the Record Office.)

It seems that, with you, out of sight is out of mind, considering that when you went away you promised to send me news of yourself: but I do not get any, though the expectation of it made me almost as happy as I should have been at your returning, which you have also delayed beyond your promise.

As for me, if you do not send me other instructions, I will do as we arranged and bring the man Monday with me to Craigmillar where he shall stay throughout Wednesday: and if I hear nothing new from you to the contrary, I shall go to Edinburgh for a blood-letting.

He [Darnley] is merrier and more good-humoured than ever you saw him, and keeps on reminding me of everything that could make me believe that he loves me. Indeed, you would say that he pays court to me; which gives me so much pleasure that I never go in to see him without being seized by the pain in my side, so much does he weary me. If Paris brings back what I sent him for, I hope it may make me better.

Pray, send full news of yourself, and tell me what I ought to do if you have not returned when I arrive: for if you do not manage it wisely, I see that the whole responsibility will fall upon my shoulders. Get everything ready, and first of all sift the matter in your own mind. I send this by Beaton who will go to Lord Balfour on the day appointed. I will say no more to you except to pray that you will let me know about your voyage. From Glasgow this Saturday morning”*

* This letter is endorsed by a clerk, “Ane short letter from Glasco to the Erle of Bothwell; profs her disdayn again her husband.” Cecil has put his cypher upon it.

LETTER TWO

(Latin, French, Scots and English. Record Office.)

BEING gone from the place where I left my heart, you may easily imagine what kind of countenance I had, considering what the body is without a heart, and that is why until dinner-time I hardly spoke to anyone and why nobody ventured to present himself, thinking that it would not be tactful to do so.

Four miles out of the town a gentleman sent by the Earl of Lennox [Darnley's father] came up to me, greeting me in the Earl's name and excusing him [? Lennox] for not having come before to see me on the score that he had not dared to do so because I had scolded Cunningham with sharp words. He also asked me to enquire into the suspicions which I had formed concerning him. This last message had been added by himself without the Earl's authority. I replied that there is no cure for fear, and that if he had not been at fault he would not now be so timid, and that I had only given sharp answers to the dubious points in his letters. In a word, I made him hold his tongue. It would take long to relate the rest. . . . Sir James Hamilton came to meet me, saying that before he [? Lennox] heard of my coming he had withdrawn and had sent Houston to him to say that he could never have believed either that he would follow him or that he would associate with the Hamiltons. He [? Houston] answered that the only cause of his journey was to see me, and that he would not join with the Stuarts or the Hamiltons without my command.

The Laird of Luce, Houston and the son of Caldwellis, with about forty horsemen, came up to me. Luce said he had been put off by the King's father [Lennox] despite the latter's written promise, the which he still possesses ; but

that they heard of my coming and the day had been postponed. And that he was not prepared to visit the Earl, who had summoned him on the sworn understanding that he would require nothing of him.

None of the townsfolk have been to see me, which makes me think that they side with the others [Lennox and Darnley]: moreover they speak well of them, at least of the son. What is more, I have seen none of the nobility except those in my retinue.

Yesterday the King summoned Joachim and asked him why I did not lodge near to him, adding that, if I did, he would rise [? get better] sooner; also, why I had come and whether it was for effecting a reconciliation; whether you [Bothwell] were here; and whether I had looked into the character of my servants; whether I had taken Paris and Gilbert to write for me; and whether I wanted to dismiss Joseph. I wonder who told him about that: and also about Sebastian's marriage.*

I asked him about his letters, in which he had complained of the cruelty of someone. He answered that he was not at all astonished by my question, but that he was so overjoyed to see me that he thought he would die of joy. All the same, he showed annoyance when I became thoughtful.

I went to my supper. The bearer of these letters [Paris] will inform you of my arrival. He [Darnley] begged me to come back and I did so. He told me how ill he was and said that he would make no Last Will but simply leave everything to me; adding that I was the cause of his sickness because of his distress on account of my strangeness toward him. †And then he said, "You ask me what were

*Note in the margin: "this berer will tell you sumwbat upon this."

† The ensuing passage right down to "compelled to keep it shut within my breast" corresponds *almost word for word* with a portion of Crawford's declaration as quoted by T. F. Henderson.

the cruelties which I mentioned in my letters ? The reference was to you alone who will not accept my repentance or my promises. I admit that I have greatly offended but not in the matter which I have always denied. I have also sinned against some of your subjects and this you have forgiven.

“I am young.

“You will say that you have often forgiven me, and that I repeat my offences. May not a man of my age, lacking good counsel, fall twice or thrice and fail in his promises, and afterwards repent of his fault and chasten himself by experience ? If I can win forgiveness, I promise not to offend hereafter. I will ask for nothing except that we may be at bed and board together as husband and wife ; and if you do not consent to that, I shall never rise from this bed again. I beg you to let me hear your decision, for God knows what grief I have suffered by making you into a god and by thinking of nothing else but you : and should I at any time give you offence, you yourself will be the cause thereof ; for if I knew that, when somebody offends against *me*, I had the refuge of being able to take my trouble to you, I would make no complaint to any other : but now if I hear anything I am compelled to keep it shut within my breast, since I am not on easy terms with yourself. This troubles me so direly that it deprives me of wisdom and good understanding.”

I answered him all the time, but it would be a long business to write it all down. I asked him why he had considered going away in that English ship. This he denied under oath but admitted that he had talked with the English. Then I enquired about the interrogation of William Hiegate. This he also denied till I repeated the very words which he had uttered. He then said that Minto had informed him that they said that one of the council had sent for my signa-

ture to letters which would put him in prison or, if he did not obey, would send him to death. And that he had addressed the same enquiries to Minto who answered that he thought this was true. As for the rest, concerning William Hiegate, he has confessed to it, but not till the day after my arrival.*

In the end he desired much that I would lodge in his lodging. I have refused, and told him that he must be disinfected and that this could not be done here. He said to me that he had heard that I had brought the litter [i.e. an ambulance] but would have liked much better to go with me. I believe he feared that I might take him prisoner. I answered that I would carry him away with me to Craigmillar where the doctors and I could look after him without my being too far away from my son. He replied that he was ready to go wherever I wished, provided that I would assure him of what he had required of me.

He wanted not to be seen by anybody. He gets angry whenever I speak of Walcar, and says that he will pluck his ears from his head and that he lies : because I had asked him about that matter and also why he had complained of some of the lords and had threatened them. He denied it, and said that he liked all of them, and begged me not to believe anyone but himself ; and that as for me, he would rather lose his life than give me displeasure.

At this point he employed so many little flatteries, so adroitly and with such weight, as would have astonished you. I had almost forgotten that he said he could not suspect me in the Hiegate affair and will never believe that I, his own flesh and blood, would do him any injury, and that he knew well that I had refused to subscribe to it. That if anybody aimed at his life, he would sell it dearly, but that

* This suggests that the first part of the letter was written on the third day of her sojourn in Glasgow.

he neither did nor would suspect anyone but would love all those whom I loved.

He would not let me go but wanted me to sit up with him. I pretended that it all seemed to me quite genuine, and said I would think it over, and when I had excused myself from staying up with him that night, he said that he cannot sleep. I have never known him to speak more mildly or to behave so well; and if I had not learned by experience that his will is as weak as wax, and that mine is hard as a diamond which no arrow could pierce unless it were shot by your hand, it might well have chanced that I should have pitied him. However, have no fears, this fortress will be held to the death: but look to it lest your own be surprised by that faithless nation [? Lady Bothwell and her brother] which with no less pertinacity will contend for it against you.

I think they [Darnley and Lady Bothwell] have been taught at the same school. The one here has always a tear or two in his eye: he greets everybody, down to the meanest, and flatters them in a pitiable manner in order that he may prevail on them to be sorry for him. To-day his father [Lennox] bled at the nose and at the mouth, and you can guess the significance of that. I have seen nothing of him [Lennox] since, because he has remained in his room. The King requires that I should give him [Darnley] his food with my own hands: but believe no more where you are than I do here.

There—that is the end of my first day's work. I hope to finish the rest to-morrow. I write everything down, no matter how unimportant, so that by choosing out the best you may be able to form your judgement.* I am busy here

* In the margin of the English text are the words, "for your purpose," as an alternative to "for you to judge."

with a task which is infinitely uncongenial : but would you not like to see how trimly I lie or at least how well I dissimulate while speaking the truth ? He has given away to me everything that is in the name of the Bishop and of Sunderland, although I have not spoken to him or said a single word of what you reported to me : so do I merely by the power of flattery and coaxing cause him to feel sure of me. And by complaining about the Bishop I have got everything from him,* and the rest is taken for granted.

We are conjoined with two examples of human faithlessness ; the devil would sunder us, and yet God has joined us for ever so that we may be two utterly-loyal persons beyond all others who have been knit together. That is my faith and I will die in it.

Forgive my bad writing,—you must guess at a half of it. I cannot amend it because I am not easy. Nevertheless I have great joy in writing to you while the others are asleep, since for my part I cannot sleep as they do nor as I wish I could, and that is to sleep in the arms of my dearest friend from whom I pray God to deflect every evil and to grant him good fortune. I am going to rest until the morning so that I may finish my “billet” here ; but it grieves me that this rest stops me from writing news of myself, so much I have to write.

Send me word what you have decided on about you-know-what in order that we may understand one another and that nothing may be done any other way.

* In the French, this phrase seems to have been “J’ai tiré les vers du nez.” The English version has “I have taken the worms out of his nose,” which is explained in the margin, “I have disclosed all, I have known what I would.” A similar idiom occurs in an undisputed letter by Mary. This point seems to prove that the letters were first written in French.

I am worried,* and I shall go to bed, and yet I cannot forebear scribbling so long as there is any paper. Cursed be this pocky lad who is giving me so much trouble, for were it not for him I should have fairer subjects to talk of. He almost killed me with his breath which is worse than your uncle's was, and yet I was not close to him but sitting in a chair at the foot of his bed, he being right at the other end.

The message of the father (Lennox) by the way.†

The talk from Sir James Hamilton.

What the Laird of Luce told me concerning the delay.

The questions that he (Darnley) put to Joachim.

Domestic arrangements.

My own condition (of health).

The reason for my arrival.

Joseph.

Item, conversation between him (Darnley) and me.

His desire to please me, and his repentance.

The meaning of his letters.

The affair of William Hiegate, and his departure.

Lord Livingstone.

I had almost forgotten about Lord Livingstone who whispered at supper to Mistress Reres [who acted as go-between for Mary and Bothwell] that she should drink to some

* In the published French, "Je suis toute nue"; in the Latin, "Ego nudata sum"; in the English, "I am weary"; in the Scots, "I am irkit." A commentator has suggested that the French *translator* mistook "irkit" for "naked." Another writer points out that the letter was written in January when few persons sit naked as they write; but in those days people did go naked to bed. "Irkkit" means irked, worried. This point has been used to insist that Mary wrote the letters in Scots; but surely Buchanan, who made the Latin versions, must have known his own mother-tongue and could not have translated "irkit" as "nudata"? What, we may wonder, was the word in the missing, *original* French?

† These are the memoranda which, I suggest, she jotted down the night before.

persons she knew of, provided that I would trust them. And after supper, when I was leaning against him* and warming myself, he said to me, "It was fine to go visiting the sick, but the joy of your coming there cannot have been so great as the anger will be of someone who has to-day been abandoned and who will never be happy until he sees you again." I enquired of him who that might be? Giving me a little hug, he replied, "One of his folk who has left you this day." You can guess who that is.

To-day I worked at the bracelet until two of the clock, trying to put the key into the lock which is tied at the bottom by two little cords. It is badly done because I had so little time, but I shall make it much better. Meanwhile make sure that nobody who is now here shall ever see it, for the whole world would recognise it, seeing that I have been making it in their presence.

Now I must go to this odious interview [with Darnley]. You compel me to dissimulate so much that I have a horror of doing it: you make me almost play the part of a traitor. I want you to remember that if my longing to please you did not force me, I would sooner die than do such things. It makes my heart bleed. Shortly, then, he will not come with me unless I undertake to make common board and bed with him, as heretofore, and do not so often desert him: and that if I will so promise, he will do whatever I wish and will follow me. But he begged me to wait another two days.

At first he spoke more sharply, as the bearer of these presents will tell you, about his departure and his talk with the Englishmen, but afterwards he became mild once more.

Among other secret matters he told me that he was well aware that my brother had reported to me how he [Darnley] had fled with him [Murray] to Stirling, affairs of which he

* Much has been made of these words. The (published) French says, "against his shoulders."

denied half, and in particular that he had gone into my brother's room. And in order that he should have confidence in me I had to pretend to give way a little, and so when he prayed that I would promise that as soon as he was cured, we should make our bed together, I told him, feigning to believe his fair promise, that if he did not change his mind between that time and this, I would accord him what he desired but on the understanding that he should tell nobody about it, because the Lords might be annoyed about such a proposal and might wish ill to us. They would be alarmed at what might follow, seeing that if he and I were known to be in accord, he might give out that they should pay for having so poorly esteemed him. Thus, they would be highly suspicious if I were to be seen arranging the theatre for a play which would not be to their taste.

He was now in high spirits and observed, "Do you think they will respect you the more for that ? But I am very glad that you have spoken to me about the Lords. I believe that you now want us to live together at peace, especially as otherwise greater difficulties will beset the two of us than you suppose. Now I will do whatever you would have me do, and will love all those whom you love, hoping that you will persuade them in turn to become my friends. If they do not set themselves to take away my life, I am going to love all of them equally." On this head the bearer will give you many details, because there are still many things to write about, and it is late already. You can rely upon him [the bearer] as upon your own word. Briefly, he will go, by my command, wherever you wish.

Alas, I never deceived anybody, but I submit to your will in all things. Let me know what I am to do, and whatever befalls, I will obey you. Consider, too, if you might not find some more hidden way than by using a draught, for he will have to take medicine and try the baths at

Craigmillar : and he will be staying there for several days. In a word, so far as I can make out, he is very suspicious, although he puts great trust in my word and yet not so much but that he is keeping things back. However, I will get everything out of him if you wish me to confess all : but I would never willingly deceive anyone who has faith in me. Still, you may command me in all things. So do not conceive a bad opinion of me, seeing that you are yourself the cause of all this. I would never do this against him for my own revenge.

Moreover, he touched me to the quick and on this matter spoke with great energy,—saying that his faults had been broadcast, and that if anybody had committed much worse faults, still they might well have been hidden in silence, even though they are talked about by the high and the humble. As to Reres, he said, “I pray God that the services which she renders to you may be to your honour.” He also said that neither he nor anybody now thinks that I act of my own volition, seeing that I have rejected his offers. In a word, it is certain that he is doubtful about you-know-what, and even of the safety of his life. For the rest, after I had spoken two or three kind words, he was happy and no longer afraid.

I have not seen him to-night because I am finishing your bracelet, but I can find no clasps for it. And that is what renders it imperfect, and yet I fear lest it may bring you some harm or be recognised if by any chance you should be wounded. Let me know whether you would like to have it, and if you need a little more money, and when I ought to come back, and in what vein you would have me speak to him.* He gets furious when I mention Lethington or

* In the English version, we find here, “Now so farr as I perceive I may do much without you,” and in the margin the words, “J’ay bien la vogue avec vous,” written by Cecil himself. Henderson believed that this phrase must have existed in the original French. It is not in the published French version.

you or my brother. As for the Earl of Argyle I am afraid to hear him talk about him. He assures me that he has no bad opinion of him. He does not speak either good or ill of those who are abroad,—just invariably ignores them. His father still keeps to his own room : I have not seen him.

All the Hamiltons are here, and an honourable company they provide. All the friends of the other [? Lennox] go along with me when I visit him [Darnley]. He asks that I shall be early enough to-morrow to see him get up. So that I may cut this short, the bearer will tell you the rest. If I learn anything here I will make a note of it each night. He (the bearer) will tell you the cause of my sojourn. Burn these letters ; they are dangerous, and if there is nothing well-phrased in them, it is because I think about troublous things. If you are in Edinburgh when you receive these letters, let me know.

Do not be offended if I seem to lack faith. Wanting to obey you, my dear love, I have not spared my honour, my conscience, my safety or my high station great though it is ; I ask you to accept it all in good part and not in accordance with the interpretation given to it by the false brother of your wife to whom, I beg you, not to give any credence as against the most loyal lover that you have had or ever shall have.

Pay no attention to her [Lady Bothwell] whose feigned tears ought to have less influence with you than the genuine sufferings which I endure in order that I may deserve her place, to win which I betray, against the grain of my nature, those who might hinder me. May God forgive me, and accord to you, my one friend, all the success and happiness which your humble and faithful friend wishes for you, she who hopes to be something more unto you as a reward of my grievous toil.

It is late, and yet I want never to stop writing to you. Still, having kissed your hands, I will put an end to this letter. Excuse my bad writing, and read my letter again. Also excuse the smallness of these characters, for yesterday I had no [other] paper when I wrote down the things I must keep in mind.* Keep your friend in remembrance and write to her often. Love me—as I love you : and do not forget the Lady Reres suggestion.

Of the Englishmen.

Of his mother [Lady Lennox, mother of Darnley].

Of the Earl of Argyle.

Of the Earl of Bothwell.

Of the lodging in Edinburgh.

* For a suggested explanation of this sentence and of the subsequent memoranda, turn back to page 17. She had to squeeze the last lines into a small space.

LETTER THREE

(There is no Latin or English version extant. A French version is in the Record Office State Papers, and a Scots version appeared in Buchanan's "Detection.")

MY LORD,

Whether the strain of your absence and your forgetfulness, added to the fear of danger threatening your beloved person from everybody, affords me much consolation I will leave you to judge, especially in view of the unhappiness which my cruel lot and continual misadventure seem to promise me on top of all those mischances and fears both recent and in bygone days of which you so well know. But for all that, I will not accuse you of remembering me so little or of caring so little, still less of your broken promises [or of the coldness in your writing]*, since what pleases you is acceptable to me and because my thoughts are so willingly subdued to yours that I take for granted that whatever proceeds from you does not really come from any of the causes which I have mentioned but from such as are just and reasonable and of a kind which I would myself desire. And that is the understanding upon which I have based my actions as coming from the only Sustainer of my Life. And it is only for this that I want to preserve my life because without this I should desire nothing but a sudden death. And to show you how far I humble myself before your commandments, I have sent you—by Paris—as a token of my homage an ornament for the head, seeing that the head is the leader of the other members, signifying thereby that by investing you with the spoils of that which is uppermost, the rest must necessarily be subject to you and with a consenting heart. In place of which, since you have it [the heart], I send you a sepulchre of hard stone

* In the Scots version, not in the French. In the French version there are no stops or commas. It runs right on, like a legal document.

painted black and sown with tears and bones. This stone I liken to my heart which, like it, is carved into a safe tomb or receptacle for your commands and, above all, for your name and your memory which lie therein, just as my heart is enclosed within this ring, never to come forth from it until death enables you to use my bones as trophies. Just as the ring is filled up, so have you made complete conquest of me and my heart and even my bones, which will be left to you in remembrance of your victory and of my happy and willing defeat, so to be better bestowed than I deserve. The surrounding enamel is black, signifying the steadfastness of her who sends it. The tears are beyond numbering as are also my fears of displeasing you ; tears for your absence and tears of vexation because I cannot be yours in outward show as I am unfeignedly in heart and soul, and rightly so even if my merits were greater than the greatest that I ever had, and were such as I wish they might be and which I shall strive to emulate in order that they may be worthy of your rule. Receive it, My Only Treasure, in good part as I with such extreme joy did accept our marriage which, until the marriage of our bodies be made public news, shall not go forth from my bosom as the essence of all that I hope or desire of happiness in this world. Now, fearing to displease you in the reading of this as much as I have enjoyed the writing of it, I will make an end, first having kissed your hands with such deep affection as I pray God (O you Only Sustainer of my life !) to give you a long and happy life, and to me your good favour, as being the only good that I desire and for which I starve. I have told the bearer of this letter all that I have learned, relying upon him because I know how well he stands with you, as he does also with her who will be to you for ever a humble and obedient wife and your chosen friend, dedicating altogether to you her heart, her body, unalterably, as to him whom

I made possessor of a heart whereof you may be certain that it will never change until death, nor shall evil or good have power to estrange it.*

* A clerk has written on the back of this letter, "To prouf the affectioun."

LETTER FOUR

(French and English, at Hatfield. Also Latin and Scots 'translations,' and a published French version.)

I HAVE sat up there [in Darnley's room] later than I would have done if it were not for drawing out that which the bearer will relate to you,—that I have found the best possible way of excusing your business. I have promised to bring him away to-morrow. If it seems to you good, therefore, see to it.

Now I have broken my promise that I would neither write nor send messages to you. But not in order to annoy you : and if you realised how much I am afraid just now you would not have so many contrary suspicions in your mind, suspicions which, all the same, I put up with and take in good part as coming from the thing which I most desire and most earnestly seek of all things under heaven, which is your good grace—which I will earn by my own behaviour. As for me, I will never despair of winning it, and I beg you to fulfil those promises which made me believe in your affection. Otherwise, I should consider that it had made for my unhappiness, and that the favour of the stars toward other women, who nonetheless have not a third part of the loyalty and obedience which I bear to you, must have won the advantage over me which the second love of Jason* won : not that I want to compare you with such an ill-fated person nor myself to such an entirely pitiless woman. However, you do cause me to be something like her in any matter that touches you or that may preserve you and keep you to her to whom alone you belong by right : if I may so appropriate to myself that which is won by having loved you loyally, having loved you only, as I say, and as I shall always do while I live, no matter what ills or perils may

* His first wife was Medea ; he deserted her for Glauce.

come. And for all these mishaps, of which you are the cause, give me a recompense—by keeping in mind the place which is close to here.

I do not ask that you keep your promise to-morrow. But let us be together and do not put any trust in those suspicions unless they are proved by experience to be facts. I ask nothing else of God but that you may realise that my heart is yours, and that He may guard you from all evils at least so long as I am alive, nor do I hold my life at all precious except insofar as it and I are pleasing to you. I am going to bed and will say goodnight. Let me know in good time to-morrow how you are faring, for I shall be anxious until I hear. As a bird escaped from the cage or the turtle who has no companion, I shall be alone, lamenting your absence howsoever short it may be. This letter will happily do something [? get to him] which I cannot do as I am afraid perchance that you may be asleep. I did not dare to write while Joseph, Sebastian and Joachim were about, and they had only just gone when I began to write this letter.

LETTER FIVE *

My Heart, alas ! must the folly of a woman, whose ingratitude toward me you know well, be the cause of upsetting you, seeing that I could not remedy it when I knew nothing about it ? And when I had noticed it, I could not tell you thereof because I did not know how to act in the matter, for neither in this nor in anything else will I undertake to act at all until I know your wishes, which I beg you to acquaint me with. I shall carry them out all through my life more spontaneously than you yourself will declare them : and if you do not send me word to-night what you wish me to do, I shall have to take a chance and try an enterprise which might spoil that which we two have in mind. And when she shall be married, I pray you to give me another or I shall have to take someone of a kind to please you ; but as for their talk and their loyalty to you, I cannot answer for that. I pray that the opinion of another woman shall not make you think coldly of my constancy. You mistrust me, who wish to drive away your doubts and to declare my innocence,—O my dear Life, do not refuse it, nor require me to give you proof of my obedience, my steadfast fidelity and happy subjection which is to me the very greatest delight, so long as you will accept it without question or ceremony, for if you do otherwise you will offer me the greatest outrage and the most mortal grief.

*A French version is in the Record Office State Papers. It varies slightly from the published French version. There is also a version in Scots. A clerk has endorsed the Record Office version, "Anent the despatche of Margaret Carwood—which was before her marriage—proves her affection."

LETTER SIX

(English and French at Hatfield. Also Scots and published French.)

ALAS, my Lord, why do you allow so unworthy a person to make you distrust something which is wholly yours ? I am angry. You promised that you would decide everything and that you would send word each day to tell me how to proceed. You have done nothing. I gave you good warning to be very careful of your faithless brother-in-law. He came to me, without showing in any way that he came from you, and said that you had charged him to write to you what I might wish to say to you, and when and where I could go to you, and what you might decide to do with him. And thereupon he preached at me, saying that it was a mad enterprise and that for my honour I could never marry you inasmuch as, being yourself already married, you carried me away, and that his relatives would never allow of it, and that the Lords would deny what they once said. In a word, he was utterly against us. I told him that since I had gone so far, and unless you yourself were to draw back, no argument and not even death itself could make me retract my promise. As for the place, you must forgive me if I say that you are very casual about meeting me. Choose the place yourself, and let me know. Meanwhile I am not at all at my ease, because it is now too late, and it never occurred to me that you did not think of such a possibility earlier.* If you have not changed your mind during my absence any more than I have, you would not now be trying to make your mind up. Well, there is nothing amiss on my side : and seeing that your negligence puts both of us in danger from a false brother-in-law, if things do not go right, I will never stir from this spot. I

* Mary is said to have had a daughter by Bothwell, and the child is said to have gone into a nunnery.

send this bearer to you because I dare not trust your brother with this letter nor do I rely on his discretion. He [the bearer] will tell you about me, and do try to imagine how little I benefit by having such uncertain news. I would I were dead. For I see everything is going wrong. You promised me a very different state of affairs, but absence has great power over you—who have two strings to your bow. Make haste to send me an answer so that I may not lose heart, and do not consult with your brother about our plan, for he has spoken of it and is altogether opposed to it. God give you a good night.*

* Cecil's clerk has endorsed this letter with the words, "from Sterling affore the Rawissement. Pruijs hir mask of Rawissing"; i.e. "proves her pretence of having been unwillingly ravished by Bothwell."

LETTER SEVEN

(Scots and Published French versions only.)

As to the time and the place, I leave them to your brother and you. I will follow him, and there shall be no blunder on my part. He finds many difficulties. I think he has told you about them and about all that he requires for playing his part well. As for my own role, I realise that I must act in accordance with what has been arranged.

It seems to me that your long service, and the high opinion which the Lords have of you, ought to gain you forgiveness even if you should advance yourself beyond the status of a subject. You hazarded this venture [the abduction] not in order to ravish me and to hold me captive but to be sure of a place near to me, nor can the arguments or remonstrances of other people stop me from consenting to that which you hope that your service to me will some day enable you to secure. In a word, it is for you to make sure of the Lords and to become free to marry: since for your own support you can, after such loyal service, reasonably proffer this humble request always accompanied by your persistency.

Make your excuses, therefore, and persuade them as best you may that you are compelled to chase your enemies. You will speak well enough if the matter and the theme are to your taste: and give Lethington many fair words. If this does not seem good to you, let me know, and do not throw all the blame onto me.

LETTER EIGHT

My Lord, since my last letter, your brother-in-law, as he was, has asked my advice as to what he should do after to-morrow* because there are many people here, including the Earl of Sutherland, who would sooner die, on account of the benefits which they have lately received from me, than suffer me to be carried away while they are acting as my bodyguard. On the other hand, he is afraid that if there is trouble it will be said that he was ungrateful in having betrayed me. I told him that he ought to have arranged for all that with you, and that he should get rid of all those whom he most mistrusts.

Following my advice he has decided to write to you about it ; and I am astonished to see how irresolute he is in the hour of need. I say to myself that he will play the man ; but I thought it would be well to let you know of his fear that he may be charged and accused of treason so that, without distrusting him, you may be the more careful and be the better equipped. Yesterday we had more than three hundred horse—his and Livingstone's. For the love of God, see that you are accompanied by more rather than by less ; that, indeed, is my chief anxiety.

I must go to write my despatches, and I pray God that we may soon have a happy meeting. I write in haste so that you may be warned in good time.

* Refers to Bothwell's abduction of her as she was riding " to-morrow " with a large retinue. Thus, she urges Bothwell to bring a strong force.

I

O you High Gods, have pity, and let me find
 Somehow some incontestable way to prove
 (So that he *must* believe in it) my love
 And this unwavering constancy of mind !
 Alas, he rules already with no let
 A body and a heart which must endure
 Pain and dishonour in a life unsure,
 The obloquy of friends and worse things yet.

For him I would account as nothing those
 Whom I named friends, and put my faith in foes :
 For him I'd let the round world perish, I
 Who have hazarded both conscience and good fame,
 And, to advance him, happily would die. . . .
 What's left to prove my love always the same ?

II

Into his hands, utterly into his power,
 I place my son, my life, my honour and all
 My subjects and my country, being in thrall
 To him so fast that daily, hour by hour,
 My all-surrendered soul hath no intent
 But, despite any trouble which may ensue,
 To make him see that my great love is true,
 And that my constancy is permanent.

Storm or fair weather, let come what come may !
 My soul has found its bourne and there shall stay.
 Soon will I give him proof beyond all fears
 That I am one faithful with no disguise,
 And not by feign'd submission or false tears,
 As others use, but in quite different wise.

III

(The reference throughout is to Lady Botwell.)

Folk honour her because she does your will
While I, obedient too, get blame and strife,
Not being (to my sore grief), like her, your wife,
But yet in duty I will outdo her still.
Faithful she is, and profits much thereby—
For fine it is to queen it in your house ;
Whereas what scandal doth my love arouse ;
Albeit she'll never serve you better than I !
She thinks not of the dangers that beset you ;
I have no rest, such are my fears thereof :
All her friends smiled upon her when she met you,
But against all men's wish I brought you love ;
Yet nonetheless you doubt if I be true
And make no question of *her* faith to you.

IV

By you, my Heart, by winning you for mate,
Once more the fortune of her House ascends :
By you she has enjoyed a high estate
Beyond all expectation of her friends.
She had your fast affection, O my Treasure,
And for a time she held your heart bewitched ;
With you she tasted all sweet amorous pleasure,
And by your fame her own was thrice enriched,
Nor did she suffer any loss beyond
A dull fool's joy of whom she once was fond.
Wherefore I'll not grudge aught that she may give
One who for steadfastness, goodness of heart,
Courage and brain and beauty, stands apart,
Unparalleled. And in that faith I live !

V

(The 6th, 7th and 8th lines hardly suggest the hand of a male forger. Line 12 probably refers to Boibwell's wedding-day.)

When you so wildly loved her, she was cold ;
 And when your suffering brought you near to madness,
 As comes to all whose love is uncontrolled,
 She did but counterfeit a little sadness
 That—she could catch no joy from your fierce fire.
 Her dresses proved that in her own proud view
 No imperfections, howsoever dire,
 Could blot her image from a heart so true.
 I saw in her no right and proper dread
 Lest such a husband, such a man, should die.*
 You gave her all she is ; and she, instead
 Of glorying in the hour that sealed your fate,
 Has never prized it at its own just rate :
 Yet you can say you loved her desperately !

* See Sonnet IX.

VI

And now does she begin to comprehend
 How foolishly she let herself despise
 The love of such a lover ! Now she tries
 To wheedle, flatter and deceive my friend
 With writings that are so astutely done
 That never in *her* brain were they conceived
 But, rather, from some splendid writer thieved,
 Thus hiring eloquence though having none.
 Nevertheless these writings, false in hue,
 Her tears, her cries, her bitter lamentation
 And her shrill grief, though mere dissimulation,
 Have worked so well that you suppose them true,
 And hold her letters under lock and key,
 And both believe and love her more than me.

VII

That you trust *her*, alas, is plain enough
And that you doubt *my* truth is all too plain.
O my Sole Wealth and my One Only Love,
I strive to make you sure of me—in vain :
You think me light, as far too well I see,
And watch me with suspicion all day long
Though without cause : whereby you do to me,
Dear heart, a very great and grievous wrong.
You little know what love to you I bear ;
You even fear lest someone else may win me ;
You look upon my words as empty air,
And think my heart is weak as wax within me ;
You count me a vain woman without sense :
Yet all you do makes my love more intense.

VIII

Still my love grows and, while I live, must grow,
Because of my great joy in having part—
Even though it be some corner—of that heart
To which at last my loyal love will show
So luminously that all his doubt shall go.
For him would I contend with bitterest fate,
Seek out high honours to enhance his state,
And do for him so much that he will know
How all my hopes of true content or wealth
Do in obedience and in service lie.
For him I covet fortune and bright fame ;
For him I value mine own life and health ;
For him it is that I do shoot so high :
And he will find me evermore the same.

IX

(Lines 4 and 5 refer to an occasion when Mary rode twenty miles in order to visit Boibwell who had killed an outlaw but had been seriously wounded.)

For him what countless tears I must have shed :
First, when he made himself my body's lord
Before he had my heart : and afterward
When I became distraught because he bled
So copiously that almost life went out :
And at that sight fear seized my heart and head
Both for the love I bore him and the dread
Of losing my sole rampart and redoubt.
For him I turned my honour to disgrace,
Though honour is our one sure joy and pride :
For him bade Conscience find a humbler place,
Chilled my most-trusted friends, and set aside
Every consideration ! . . . What would I do ?
Make a love-compact, Love of my heart, with you !

X

My Heart, my Blood, my Soul, my chiefest Care,
You promised that we two should taste the pleasure
Of planning the fair future at our leisure ;
Yet all night long I lie and languish here
Because my heart is sore beset with fear,
Seeing that it beats so far off from its treasure.
At times I am afraid beyond all measure
That you forget me utterly, Most Dear :
Sometimes I dread lest gossip, all-untrue,
May harden your kind thoughts from love to hate,
Or I am chilled with terror lest some new
And troublous throw of chance or shaft of fate
May swerve away from me my Dearest Love. . . .
O God, drive Thou all evil omens off !

XI

I seek but one thing—to make sure of You
Who are the sole sustainer of my life ;*
And if I am presumptuous so to do,
In spite of all their bitterness and strife,
It is because your gentle Love's one thought
Is both to love and serve you loyally,
To count the worst that fate can do as naught,
And to make *my* will with *your* will agree.
Someday you certainly will comprehend
How steadfast is my purpose, and how real,
Which is to do you pleasure until death,
Only to you, being subject : in which faith
I do indeed most fervently intend ·
To live and die. To this I set my seal.

* See Letter Three.

XII

Not seeing you, despite your word to me,
I take up men and paper, and indite
Concerning a hard case of wrong and right,
Much wondering also what your view may be :
But which of us loves better, I know well ; *
And easily may you measure which gains most. . . .

The sonnets thus end abruptly. The last of the letters appears to have been written on the day before Bothwell seized the Queen and carried her away to Dunbar Castle. Perhaps this last sonnet was interrupted by news of "what she ought to do" in preparation for the morrow.

THE FRENCH "SONNETS" *

I

O dieux ayez de moy compassion
E m'enseignes quelle preuue certane
Je puis donner qui ne luy semble vain
De mon amour et ferme affection.
Las n'est il pas ia en possession
Du corps, du cueur qui ne refuse peine
Ny dishonneur, en la vie incertane,
Offence de parents, ne pire affliction ?
Pour luy tous mes amys i'estime moins que rien,
Et de mes ennemis ie veulx esperere bien.
I'ay hazardé pour luy & nom & conscience :
Ie veux pour luy au monde renoncer :
Ie veux mourire pour luy auancer.
Que reste plus pour preuuer ma constance ?

II

Entre ses mains & en son plein pouuoir
Je metz mon filz, mon honneur, & ma vie,
Mon païs, mes sujets, mon ame assubietie
Et toute à luy, & n'ay autre vouloir
Pour mon obiect que sans le deceuoir
Suiure ie veux, malgré toute l'enuie
Qu'issir en peult, car ie nay autre envie
Que de ma foy, luy faire appercevoir,
Que pour tempeste ou bonnace qui face
Iamais ne veux changer demeure ou place.
Brief, ie feray de ma foy telle preuue,
Qu'il cognoistra sans feinte ma constance,
Non par mes pleurs, ou feinte obeissance,
Come autres font, mais par diuers espreuue.

* Here and there, for clarity, I have added accents.

III

Elle pour son honneur vous doit obeissance
Moy vous obeissant i'en puy ressevoir blasme
N'estat, a mon regret, come elle vostre femme.
Et si n'aura pourtant en ce point préeminence
Pour son proffit elle vse de constance,
Car ce n'est peu d'honneur d'estre de voz biens dame,
Et moy pour vous aymer i'en puy ressevoir blasme
Et ne luy veux ceder en toute l'obseruance.
Elle de vostre mal n'a l'apprehension
Moy ie n'ay nul repos tant ie crains l'apparence.
Par l'aduis des parents, elle eut vostre acointance :
Moy malgré tous les miens vous port affection
Et de sa loyauté prenes ferme assurance.

IV

Par vous mon cœur & par vostre alliance
Elle a remis sa maison en honneur ;
Elle a jouy par vous de la grandeur
Dont tous les siens n'auoyent nul assurance.
De vous, mon bien, elle a eu la constance,
Et a gagné pour vn temps vostre cœur,
Par vous elle a eu plaisir en bon heur,
Et pour vous à honneur & reuerence,
Et n'a perdu sinon la jouissance
D'vn fascheux sot qu'elle aymoît cherement.
Ie ne la plains d'aymer donc ardemment,
Celuy qui n'a en sens, ni en vaillance,
En beauté, en bonté, ni en constance
Point de seconde. Ie vis en ceste foy.

V

Quant vous l'aimiez, elle vsoit de froideur.
 Sy vous souffriez, pour s'amour passion
 Qui vient d'aymer de trop d'affection,
 Son doig monstroit la tristesse du cœur,
 N'ayant plesir de vostre grand ardeur.
 En ses habitz, monstroit sens fiction
 Qu'elle n'auoyt peur qu'imperfection
 Peult l'affasser hors de ce loyal cœur.
 De vostre mort ie ne vis la peur
 Que meritoit tel mary & seigneur.
 Somme, de vous elle a eu tout son bien
 Et n'a prisé ne iamais estimé
 Vn si grand heur sinon puis qu'il n'est sien,
 Et maintenant dist l'auoyr tant aymé.

VI

Et maintenant elle commence a voire
 Qu'elle estoit bien de mauuais iugement
 De n'estimer l'amour d'un tel amant
 Et voudroit bien mon amy deceuoir,
 Par les escripts tout fardes de sçauoir
 Qui pourtant n'est en son esprit croissant
 Ayns emprunté de quelque auteur luissant.
 A faict tresbien vn enuoy sans l'auoyr
 Et toutefois ses parolles fardéz,
 Ses pleurs, ses plaints remplis de fictions,
 Et ses hautes cris & lamentations
 One tant guagné que par vous sont gardés.
 Ses lettres escriptes ausquells vous donnez foy
 Et si l'aymes & croyez plus que moy.

VII

Vous la croyes las ! trop ie l'appercoy,
Et vous doutez de ma ferme constance,
(O mon seul bien & mon seul esperance)
Et ne vous peux ie asseurer de ma foy.
Vous m'estimes legier je le voy,
Et si n'aeuz en moy nul asseurance,
Et soubçonnnes mon cœur sans apparence,
Vous meffiant à trop grand tort de moy.
Vous ignores l'amour que ie vous porte,
Vous soubçonnez qu'autre amour me transporte,
Vous estimez mes parolles du vent,
Vous depeignes de cire mon las cœur,
Vous me penſes femme sans iugement,
Et tout cela augmente mon ardeur.

VIII

Mon amour croist & plus en plus croistra
Tant que je viuray, et tiendra à grandeur,
Tant seulement d'auoir part en ce cœur
Vers qui en fin mon amour paroitra
Si tres à cler que iamais n'en doutra,
Pour luy ie veux recercher la grandeur,
Et feray tant qu'en vray connoistra,
Que ie n'ay bien, heur, ni contentement,
Qu'a l'obeyr & servir loyamment.
Pour luy j'attendz toute bonne fortune,
Pour luy ie veux garder santé & vie,
Pour luy tout vertu de suiure i'ay enuie ;
Et sens changer me trouuera tout vne.

IX

Pour luy aussi ie jeté mainte larme.
 Premier quand il fut de ce corps possesseur,
 Duquel alors il n'auoyt pas le cœur.
 Puis me donna vn autre dure alarme
 Quand il versa de son sang maint drasme
 Dont de grîef il me vint, lesser douleur,
 Qui me pensa oster la vie, & la frayeur
 De perdre, las ! le seul rempart qui m'arme.
 Pour luy depuis j'ay mesprisé l'honneur
 Ce qui nous peut seul prouoir de bonheur.
 Pour luy j'ay hasardé grandeur & conscience.
 Pour luy tous mes parents i'ay quisté & amys,
 Et tous aultres respects sont à part mis :
 Brief, de vous seul ie cherche l'alliance.

X

De vous ie dis seul soustein de ma vie
 Tant seulement ie cherche m'asseurer,
 Et si ose de moy tant presumer
 De vous guagner maugré toute l'enuie.
 Car c'est le seul desir de vostre chère amye,
 De vous seruir & loyaument aymer,
 Et tous malheurs moins que riens estimer,
 Et vostre volonté de la mienne suiure.
 Vous conoistres avecques obeissance
 De mon loyal deuoir n'omettant la science
 A quoy i'estudiray pour tousiours vous complaire
 Sans aymer rien que vous, soubz la suiuction,
 De qui ie veux sens nulle fiction
 Viure & mourir & à ce j'obtempere.

XI

Mon cœur, mon sang, mon ame, & mon soussy,
Las, vous m'aues promis qu'aurious plaisir
De deuiser auecques vous à loysir,
Toute la nuit, ou ie languis icy
Ayant la cœur d'extreme peour transie,
Pour voir absent le but de mon desir
Crainte d'oubly vn coup me vient a saisir,
Et l'autrefois ie crains que rendursi
Soit contre moy vostre amiable cœur
Par quelque dit d'un meschant rapporteur.
Un autrefois ie crains quelque auenture
Qui par chemin deturne mon amant,
Par vn fascheux & nouveau accident.
Dieu deturne toute malheureux augure !

XII

Ne vous voyant selon qu'aues promis,
I'ay mis la main au papier pour escrire
D'vn different que ie voulou transcrire.
Ie ne sçay pas quel sera vostre aduise,
Mais ie sçay bien qui mieux aymer sçaura,
Vous diriés bien qui plys y guagnera.

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